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ABSTRACT

Intended primarily for teachers and administrators, this paper presents 20 guidelines as the basis for an evaluation procedure for workbook, skillbook, and ditto master components of basal reading programs. The paper begins with a discussion of how and why workbooks are used in the classroom, a description of the original study from which the guidelines were developed, the guidelines and examples, and recommendations to teachers, publishers, and researchers. The guidelines include the following: (1) workbooks should reflect the most important aspects of what is being taught in the program; (2) workbooks should contain, in a form that is readily accessible to students and teachers, extra tasks for students who need extra practice; (3) the vocabulary level of the workbook tasks should be related to that of the rest of the program and to the students using the program; (4) the instructions should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to follow; (5) the layout of pages should combine attractiveness with utility; (6) at least some of the workbook tasks should be fun and have an obvious payoff to them; (7) most student response modes should be consistent from task to task, and should be as close as possible to reading or writing; (8) the art that appears on workbook pages must be consistent with the prose of the task; and (9) when appropriate, workbook tasks should be accompanied by brief explanations of purpose for both teachers and students. (HTH)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF READING

Reading Education Report No. 52

EVALUATING WORKBOOKS

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Abstract

Twenty guidelines specified in an earlier paper on workbooks written for workbook developers (Osborn, 1982) are used as the basis for an evaluation procedure that can be used by teachers and administrators evaluating the workbook, skillbook, and ditto master components of basal reading programs. This paper includes a short review of how workbooks are used in classrooms, for what purposes, a short discussion of the original study, and finally recommendations to the publishers, teachers and researchers.

Evaluating Workbooks

The focus of this paper is on the workbooks that are a much used component of most basal reading programs. Twenty guidelines specified in an earlier paper on workbooks written for workbook developers (Osborn, 1982) are used as the basis for an evaluation procedure that can be used by teachers and administrators evaluating the workbook, skillbook, and ditto master components of basal reading programs. This paper also includes a short review of how workbooks are used in classrooms, for what purposes, a short discussion of the original study, and finally recommendations to the publishers who create workbooks, the teachers who use workbooks, and the researchers who (should) consider their value and their design.

The use of workbooks. My interest in workbooks derived from a classroom study that documented how student time was spent during reading periods (Mason & Osborn, 1981). For this study, each of 45 classrooms, grades one through six, was observed for two complete reading periods. The observations were made in classrooms that used basal reading programs. That the workbooks (and skillbooks and ditto masters) that accompanied the basal programs were used regularly in these classrooms was evident from examining the data obtained by the classroom observers, and from analyzing interviews with the teachers. Furthermore, the observations revealed that, in most of the classrooms, the

students spent as much or more time working independently in their workbooks as they did working with their teachers.

We also found that teachers used workbooks independently of how their classrooms were organized. Two types of classroom organizations (self-contained and cross-class groupings) were observed. Workbooks were used for about the same amount of time in each type of classroom organization. In a self-contained classroom, workbooks have an obvious management function. But what fascinated me was that, in cross-class grouped classrooms where teachers have to deal only with one group of students, work in workbooks was a regular feature of the reading lesson. It was evident that these teachers organized their reading periods to include student time in workbooks, even when there was not a management need to do so. We thus concluded that the teachers we worked with regarded workbooks as an important element of a reading program, and not as mere time fillers.

The purpose of workbooks. The evidence from this classroom study is that teachers use workbook type materials a great deal. Several obvious explanations can be forwarded to explain their widespread use. Teachers want to provide their students with practice on what is being taught, with review of what has already been taught, and with an integration of what has been taught into what is being taught.

(a) Workbooks provide the teacher with what is often the only clear and uncompromised information about what each student

can do. Typically, a teacher working with a group of students will ask one student to read a passage or answer a question. The teacher must assume that the students who are not reading or responding are able to read the passage and answer the questions. In contrast, workbook activities require students to do a protracted amount of work independently. Student performance on workbook tasks can provide teachers with extended information about the work of each of their students.

(b) Workbook activities train students to work independently. In most classrooms, students do their workbook tasks independently. It is likely that several years of this kind of activity helps train students to work on their own. (What is important, of course, is that the work provided in the workbooks is possible to do independently, is worth spending time on, and leads up to the task demands of the kind of work that the students will face in junior high and high school.)

An Examination of Workbooks

The amount of time I saw students engaged in workbook activities inspired me to look at some of the workbooks that accompany basal reading programs. I was interested in getting a sense of how what is taught in a basal reading program appears in its workbook components. Since workbooks are supposed to be part of a delivery system, how well they support the rest of the system should be evaluated.

As I examined workbooks, I asked myself questions about sufficiency, efficiency, and effectiveness. Were there a sufficient number of activities to give students practice with new learning? Were the activities efficient--in that they were well conceived, well-written, and correlated with the teacher instruction prescribed in the teacher's guide and the text provided in the reader? Most importantly, were the activities effective? That is, were they capable of making a positive difference to the students' reading performance? I realized a definitive answer to this last question could be given only after serious and long term classroom studies. I decided, however, that until such studies are done, the effectiveness of workbooks would have to be judged on the basis of such criteria as sufficiency and efficiency. It also became apparent that, since there is almost nothing in the educational literature about either the sufficiency, efficiency, or effectiveness of workbook activities, workbook examiners would have to evaluate workbooks from the vantage points of their own experiences, some educated guesses, and a belief in the notion that the meaningful practice of what is being learned makes a difference.

When I began, I determined to combine my classroom experience with the experience of analyzing the workbooks that were piled on my desk. My professional life has included working as a reading supervisor with teachers and students. I have spent a lot of time looking over students' shoulders as they worked in

workbooks, and even more time analyzing the workbook pages of students who had completed their assignments. When I worked in classrooms, my special concern was for the students for whom learning to read is difficult. Such students were also my concern as I looked through the workbooks on my desk. Relevant and challenging workbooks are probably important to most students, but they may be critically important to those students for whom learning to read is difficult. These students probably do more workbook tasks than other students because workbooks (and supplementary workbooks and additional ditto masters) are what teachers turn to when looking for additional practice materials for students having trouble.

The procedures I used were simple. I analyzed tasks, keeping in mind the criteria of sufficiency and efficiency. As I examined a workbook, I would follow along in the teacher's guide, and the text, to see what was going on in the rest of the lesson. What I saw (and did not see) prompted me to put together a chapter that contained a set of 20 guidelines for publishers to consider as they developed workbook materials. Most of the guidelines were illustrated by "counter-examples." The "counter-examples" were taken from different workbooks to demonstrate what can go wrong with the design of workbook tasks (Osborn, 1983). In this paper, the 20 guidelines are put forth to be considered by workbook evaluators--teachers using workbooks with their

students, and adoption committees examining the workbook components of basal reading programs.

Some Guidelines for Evaluating Workbook Tasks

1. A sufficient proportion of workbook tasks should be relevant to that instruction that is going on in the rest of the unit or lesson.

A procedure is needed for analyzing the content of workbooks and determining their relationship to the rest of the lesson and to previous lessons. Table 1 can be used to record and compare the teaching events described in the teacher's guide and the types of tasks that appear in the accompanying workbooks.

Insert Table 1 about here.

The table has been filled in to permit a rough comparison of the content of a teacher's guide and the types of tasks that appear in the accompanying workbooks. The vocabulary comprehension, decoding, study skills, and optional activities included in the teacher's guide are matched with the workbook tasks in each book. A more complete filling in of the table would include listing the words of the word recognition and vocabulary activities in the teacher's guide and the words the students use in the workbook tasks. Such a listing is useful in determining the amount of vocabulary practice and review in workbook tasks.

2. Another portion of workbook tasks should provide for a systematic and cumulative review of what has already been taught.

The intent of this guideline is not only to ascertain how the workbook pages relate to what is being taught in a given lesson, but to document how much review activity is provided for students. Completing tables for at least three consecutive lessons (or units) will give evaluators a sense of how much review is available in the workbook.

3. Workbooks should reflect the most important (and workbook appropriate) aspects of what is being taught in the program.

The completed tables for three consecutive lessons and the experience of the teachers evaluating the workbooks are probably the best means of determining importance and appropriateness. For example, if the teacher's guide directs the teacher to teach about the sequencing of ideas, yet the workbook tasks associated with that lesson (or the next lesson) do not provide practice on sequencing tasks, evaluators may judge that "importance" might be a problem with the workbooks of this basal program. Additional checks of the relationships betwen topics covered in the teachers' guides and workbooks in other lessons should follow. It is important to remember, however, that not all instruction is "workbook appropriate." If listening to the sound patterns in poems is part of the teacher-directed lesson, the decision not to

include a written practice task for such auditory activity is probably appropriate.

4. Workbooks should contain, in a form that is readily accessible to students and teachers, extra tasks for students who need extra practice.

Most basal programs provide supplementary workbook materials created for students who need extra practice. These tasks should be especially valuable tasks, and not just more of the same (unless the same is evaluated as valuable)--or worse yet, busy work activities with minimal instructional value. Compare, for example, a syllabication task that requires students to color, cut out, and paste words into shapes, with one that has children marking the syllables in words--perhaps following models that illustrate different syllabication generalizations. The cutting, pasting, and coloring task might keep children busy for a long time, but is unlikely to give them much practice in dividing words into syllables.

Table 2 appears below. The table can be used to tally the number of tasks for different topics and the number and appropriateness of the tasks. The table is filled out for four topics found in a second-grade workbook. (The extra help tasks appear in a second, supplementary workbook.)

Insert Table 2 about here.

This part of the table shows that in this workbook of this series, extra help tasks are available, and that the workbook evaluator has judged about half of the tasks as appropriate.

5. The vocabulary level of workbook tasks should relate to that of the rest of the program and to the students using the program.

A completed table, similar to that described in guideline 1, can display the vocabulary presented in the teacher-directed part of the lesson, and the vocabulary requirements of the workbook tasks. By comparing the two lists, evaluators can identify programs that include a lot of vocabulary in workbooks not taught in the rest of the program. For example, if a workbook task directs students to underline words in passages that show feelings of hostility, mystery, hilarity, and bewilderment, and these concepts do not appear in any vocabulary taught prior to the appearance of that task (nor in any of the stories the students read), the evaluators should be alert to further instances of the lack of relationship between the components of the program.

6. The instructional language used in workbook tasks must be consistent with that used in the rest of the lesson and in the rest of the workbook.

That the instructions or explanations that appear in the teacher's manual should be consistent with the instruction used in practice materials seems obvious. To evaluate workbook tasks

for consistency with the rest of the program, compare the instructions given the teacher to explain new skills and concepts with those given the students in the workbook tasks. If, for example, the teacher's manual directs the teacher to describe the differences between fact and fiction, but the students must decide if paragraphs they read in their workbooks are real or not real, there is an inconsistency between components of the program. Inconsistency can also be found from task to task within a workbook, or even within a single workbook task.

7. Instructions should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to follow; brevity is a virtue.

If workbook evaluators are experienced teachers, they know very well that many students do not read instructions, but simply go ahead and do the tasks. When easy-to-teach students decide they must read instructions, they are usually able to follow them; even if the instructions are confusing, ambiguous, or unclear. In contrast, when hard-to-teach students are confronted by unclear instructions, their inability to follow them only confounds their tenuous ability to perform the tasks. It is for these students that clear instructions are especially important.

Probably the best way to evaluate instructions is for the workbook evaluators to read a group of instructions on consecutive pages of workbooks. While reading, they should watch for:

(a) Excessive wordiness--for example, "Use the words letters stand for and the sense of the other words to find out what the new word in heavy black print is."

(b) Ambiguity--for example, sometimes "boxes" that exist in instructions are not evident on the page; unclear uses of such words as "first," "second," "last," "over," "under," "before," and "after" are common.

(c) Embedded steps--for example, "Read the first sentence, and fill in the missing word. Read the second sentence. Find the word from the first sentence that makes sense in the second sentence and print it where it belongs. Then do what the last sentence says. Repeat for all the other sentences."

(d) Lost steps--for example, "Fill in the blanks at the bottom of the page" (This instruction appears at the top of a page and is the last of several different instructions. The students are likely to forget it by the time they get to the bottom of the page.

(e) Confusion--there are directions that adults have trouble figuring out; for example, "Four things are named in each row. Three of the things named are part of the other thing. Put a ring around the thing that the others are part of in each row."

(f) Extended complexity—instructions should become <u>less</u> complex as students do repeated examples of the same type of task. In many workbooks, complex instructions are continually repeated in the same form. As students become acquainted with

task forms, surely the complexity of the instructions can be reduced. For example, an initial instruction for a workbook task could read: "Read the sentence and the words below it. Decide which word will best complete the sentence. Write that word on the line." Subsequent appearances could have a much shorter instruction: "Complete each sentence."

(g) Negation--instructions that require students to process words indicating negation are more difficult than those written without such words. For example, "Circle the word in each row that has a short vowel sound" is easier to process than "Circle the word in each row that does not have a long vowel sound."

(h) Sufficient information--some instructions are <u>not</u> sufficient. For example, an instruction that asks students to underline the word with the same sound as the word that names the picture does <u>not</u> contain sufficient information. (The words represented by the pictures each contain several sounds.)

8. The layout of pages should combine attractiveness with utility.

Evaluators should watch out for workbook pages that look cluttered, busy, and disorganized and for long lines of type that are difficult to read. Design layouts should help students understand the requirements of the task. For example, the performance requirements of this task (Example A) may be obscure to some students, whereas in Example B each part of the task is labeled and the requirements of the task are more evident.

Example A

Draw a line between the syllables of each word. Then write the number of the rule you used.

1. between double consonant letters
2. between unlike consonant letters
3. between a vowel letter and a consonant
4. between two vowel letters

scaling _____	duty _____	letter _____
battle _____	potato _____	person _____
butter _____	explain _____	jelly _____

Example B

Draw a line between the syllables of each word. Then write the number of the rule you used.

Rules

1. between double consonant letters
2. between unlike consonant letters
3. between a vowel letter and a consonant
4. between two vowel letters

Words	Rule Number	Words	Rule Number	Words	Rule Number
scaling		duty		letter	
battle		potato		person	
butter		explain		jelly	

9. Workbook tasks should contain enough content so that there is a chance that a student doing the task will learn something and not simply be exposed to something.

"Enrichment" tasks that contain difficult (and often important) concepts frequently appear only once. For example, tasks that require students to make analogies may be worthwhile, but unless the tasks appear within a well-planned sequence of

activities, those students who would most profit from practice with such an important language concepts are not likely to benefit. A workbook with a large number of "exposure" tasks is probably a poor risk for hard-to-teach students.

10. Tasks that require students to make discriminations must be preceded by a sufficient number of tasks that provide practice on the components of the discrimination.

When students have practiced and mastered component tasks, they have a better chance of coping successfully with tasks that require them to apply what they have learned to complex tasks. For example, if a task requires students to identify metaphors and similies, evaluators should check that the task has been preceded by exercises in which students work separately with each of these figurative language forms. The opportunity to practice component tasks is especially important for hard-to-teach students.

11. The content of workbook tasks must be accurate and precise; workbook tasks must not present wrong information nor perpetuate misrules.

Phonics, word analysis, and comprehension tasks should be looked at with a critical eye to make sure that students do not practice, for example, that "the sound of o in hope is short," or that "the main idea is the first sentence of a paragraph." A workbook with more than one or two such tasks should be viewed with caution, and perhaps with alarm.

12. At least some workbook tasks should be fun and have an obvious payoff to them.

Workbook evaluators should not expect all tasks to be fun and games, but occasional puzzles, word games, cartoons, and other gamelike tasks are probably appreciated by students.

Caution: watch for worthwhile tasks that are fun, not pointless tasks that are fun.

13. Most student response modes should be consistent from task to task.

For example, the generalized use of the mark x may cause errors. Students are likely to be confused, for example, if in one task they are directed to use x to mark words a group of sentences do not need, and in the very next task to use x to mark the sentences that indicate the correct details from a story.

14. Student response modes should be the closest possible to reading or writing.

Except for workbooks designed for children who have not as yet developed writing skill, student response modes that call for more writing rather than less writing seem desirable. For example, tasks that require students to copy in letters that stand for words (Example C) probably teach less about word meaning than tasks that require students to write in words.

Example C

Write the letter for the word that belongs in each blank.

a. jumprope
b. stars
c. pouring

1. Where did you leave your _____?
2. The rain was _____ from the sky.
3. Marcy got seven _____ on her papers.

Surely, the student checking over the sentence, "Where did you leave your a?" will not be encouraged to check the next sentence.

A similar task, but cast in a format closer to the realities of reading and writing is Example D:

Example D

Write the word that belongs in each blank.

jumprope
stars
pouring

1. Where did you leave your _____?
2. The rain was _____ from the sky.
3. Marcy got seven _____ on her papers.

Another example of response modes is drawn from main idea and sequencing tasks. If there is a purpose for main idea and sequencing practice tasks, it is to help children identify what is important in what they read. Underlining the main idea sentence in a paragraph (if one exists) is more like real life studying than finding the appropriate main idea sentence from

three sentences in a multiple choice item. But requiring students to write out main ideas (whether they be stated or implied in a paragraph) is definitely closer to the challenges of real life reading and studying. By the same token, asking students to write out the sequence of ideas in a paragraph (Example E) seems much better preparation for reading and studying than having them write numbers next to an array of phrases or sentences (Example F).

Read the paragraph.

Rochelle liked to ice skate. On Saturday mornings she went ice skating, but only after she got her jobs and practicing done. Last Saturday Rochelle woke up early. She ate breakfast and then began work. She made her bed. She cleaned her room. Then she helped her mother sort the laundry. She helped her mother carry the laundry baskets to their car. After her mother drove away, Rochelle washed the dishes that were in the kitchen sink. Then she took her flute out of its case and started to practice. She had been practicing for more than an hour when her mother came home from the laundromat and said, "Rochelle, it's time for us to go ice skating in the park."

Example E

Rochelle did five jobs before she and her mother went skating. List those jobs in the order she did them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Example F

Number the sentences to show the order of events in the paragraph.

__Rochelle practiced the flute.

__Rochelle made her bed.

__Rochelle sorted the laundry.

__Rochelle did the dishes.

__Rochelle carried the laundry baskets to the car.

Example E requires the student to write more (and the teacher to spend more time correcting) than Example F, but it does seem more like a real life study task.

15. **The instructional design of individual tasks and of task sequences should be carefully planned.**

A well-designed task makes the performance requirements of the task clear, causes the student to attend to the important elements of the task, and permits the student to move without hazard through the task from beginning to end. So little has been written on the task design of workbooks that it is difficult to provide workbook evaluators with precise guidelines, but a few illustrations will provide some aspects of instructional design to consider.

(a) This item purports to give students practice reading sentences that use two different meanings for the same word. The students are told to put a circle around the sentence that goes with the picture.

Example G

— Flowers grow in the earth.

— The earth moves around the sun.

The students have to read only as far as flowers in the first sentence to get the correct answer. The task is written so that no further reading is necessary, which means there is not a high probability the students will practice reading the target words.

A similar item, but written so that students are much more likely to read each of the target words is the following:

Example H

—Her dog sleeps in that shed.

—I wish her dog didn't shed.

(b) Two part tasks in which the success of working Part 2 depends upon the student getting all of the items correct in Part 1, are neither instructionally sound, nor fair to students.

(c) Some tasks are written so that student responses do not indicate to the teacher what the students know. For example, responses to this kind of syllabication task indicate only if the students know how many syllables are in words, but not where the divisions occur (Example I).

Example I

Read each word. Color the number of circles to tell how many syllables there are in each word.

outside	oooo	everyone	oooo	vegetables	oooo
Tuesday	oooo	point	oooo	Saturday	oooo
potato	oooo	stopped	oooo	morse	oooo

(It can also be noted that taking the time to color the circles carefully is probably a big waste of time.)

(d) Some tasks are written so that student responses do not indicate whether or not they are correct. In the following example, the teacher has no way of telling if the student has identified the <u>before</u> events or <u>after</u> events; the lines the students draw only indicate that two obviously connected events have been matched.

Example J

Draw lines from the sentences that show <u>before</u> to those that show <u>after</u>.

The girl fell on the sidewalk.	Mail fell in the mailbox.
The mailbox was full.	The girl hurt her arm.
The water spilled from the bucket.	The man filled the bucket.

(e) Some tasks make <u>unreasonable</u> demands upon students. The task below would be difficult (and tedious and boring) for even the most compulsive adult to complete, and is probably frustrating and self-defeating for most second-grade students. (Such tasks usually present many sentences for the students to analyze.)

Example K

Read each sentence. Decide which consonant letter is used the most. Underline it each time.

1. My most important toy is a toy train.
2. Nancy, who lives in the next house, has nine cats.
3. Will you bring your box of marbles to the party?

Another example of unreasonableness follows:

Example L

In these sentences some words end with these blends: lf, lp, lt, nd, nt, cut, ft, mp. Underline the letters for these blends in the words in these sentences.

1. The cat and dog are sitting on a shelf.
2. We will plant a tree in the camp.
3. The snow and ice will slowly melt.

(A question that often comes up after a given task is labeled "unreasonable" is "What good is this task anyway?" Such questions should be honored and truthfully answered by workbook evaluators.)

16. Workbooks should contain a finite number of task types and forms.

The repetition of task forms is <u>not</u> a common practice in workbooks. On the contrary, there are usually almost as many task forms as there are pages in a workbook. The frequent use of the same task forms, but with differing content has two advantages: it reduces the need for teacher help, and once students have learned to work a task form, students can concentrate on task content.

One procedure for charting the task forms in a workbook is as follows:

a. Select 30 consecutive pages from a workbook.

b. Write down a topic for each page, for example, "practice with words with sw," or "alphabetical order."

c. Mark any task that has another task in the same form.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Table 3 represents thirty consecutive pages in a third-grade workbook. The labels in squares, circles, and wave circles mark the number of times task forms are repeated. That only three forms were repeated one time each may not seem a lot--but even such minimal repetition of forms is more than occurs in many workbooks. Note that not all similar task labels imply a similar task form.

Since counting task forms also involves counting task topics, the other benefit of this kind of evaluation is the revelation of the number of topics covered in a workbook. Sometimes there are as many different task forms and topics as there are pages in the workbook. The variety of topic and the lack of repetition of either topic or task form may lead the workbook evaluators to wonder about the sufficiency of practice available to students: Do workbooks contain a sufficient number

of tasks to provide the massed practice that might help hard-to-teach students master the skills and concepts of the program?

17. The art that appears on workbook pages must be consistent with the prose of the task.

Pictures that are confusing and inappropriate to the task are bad--no matter how nice they may look. Inappropriate and confusing art can turn a task into a guessing game. Sometimes pictures are extraneous to the content of a workbook page and seem to exist solely as a decorative effort--and as occupiers of space that could perhaps be more profitably used.

Workbook evaluators can sample the appropriateness of art by following this procedure:

a. Randomly select 20 illustrated pages from a workbook.

b. Examine each page according to the following criteria

- Clarity of drawings (Does the picture illustrate what it is supposed to?)
- Relationship of picture to items (Do the pictures relate to the text?)
- Appropriateness (Are the pictures necessary? Is their presence a help or a hindrance to completing the task?

Particular attention should be given to an examination of the sound analysis tasks that frequently appear in beginning levels of a program. Example M represents a hazardous task.

Example M

Circle the pictures whose names begin with the beginning sound of the word cat.

(pictures) ice cube car crown cap

The ice cube could be identified as beginning with the same sound as the word ice, the car identified as an automobile, the cap as a hat and the crown as a king. None of these perfectly reasonable identifications would do much for the score of the student who was thinking of them. Teachers should be aware that such tasks need a lot of teacher direction to have a chance of achieving their intent.

18. Cute, nonfunctional, and space-and-time consuming tasks should be avoided.

While one person's "fun" task may be another's "non-functional" task, workbooks with large numbers of non-functional and space-eating tasks should make teachers uneasy. The proportion of nonfunctional tasks in a workbook can be calculated by counting. Even though the success of this effort will depend upon the agreement (or near agreement) of the people evaluating the workbooks, such an effort is worth pursuing. If more than 5% of workbook tasks are judged non-functional, the practice function of that workbook would have to be questioned, especially for hard-to-teach students.

19. When appropriate, workbook tasks should be accompanied by brief explanations of purpose for both teachers and students.

Explanations about the purpose of the tasks should be available to the teacher and when headings to explain purpose are written for students, the purpose should be in language the students are likely to understand.

The following task titles selected from several workbooks do not seem capable of revealing to students the point of the task. (The point of each task is in parentheses.)

The Boy Roy (practice with the oi sound)

Putting Down Roots (practice with root words)

Now Hear This (a vocabulary/picture task)

That's not a Ship (a task with Sh and th sounds)

The following more straightforward set of titles, also selected from several workbooks, are probably more communicative of their tasks' intents.

Cause and Effect

Alphabetical Order

Compound Words

Fiction and non-fiction

20. English major humor should be avoided.

This final guideline is the desperate cry of someone who has looked at too many workbooks. Adult humor and adult use of language that will pass right by most students should be discouraged. Perhaps tasks featuring such language are the

desperate attempts at cleverness of the underemployed English majors whom I suspect are responsible for the development of many workbook tasks. An overriding guideline for all instruction (whether it be delivered in the written mode or in the oral mode) is clarity of communication. Asking second-grade students to, for example, "match the consonant clusters with the grape clusters" or to (in a dictionary task) "Have your fingers do the walking" is of questionable communicative value.

Some Recommendations

The evaluation procedures described in this paper should permit workbook evaluators to get a sense of the sufficiency and efficiency of the workbooks they are using or contemplate using. The procedure employs counting (to ascertain the number of tasks devoted to various topics), matching (to compare the content of the workbook with the content of the rest of the lesson), and subjective judgment (to evaluate the usefulness and suitability of tasks). The procedure will produce data that is partially "hard" and partially "soft," but that should be an improvement over the often used "flip" method of determining the suitability of workbooks. (In following the procedures, workbook evaluators may wish to eliminate some of the guidelines and create additional guidelines.)

If the examination of a set of workbooks by a group of workbook evaluators reveals an unacceptable number of problems and weaknesses in a given workbook, then a couple of obvious

questions usually come to mind: "Should workbooks be improved?" and "Can workbooks be improved?" The answer to the first question must be "Yes," because workbooks are relied upon so heavily in the teaching of reading. The answer to the second question could be a resounding "Yes," if three groups took it upon themselves to pay some concerted attention to workbooks. These three groups are: (a) educational researchers interested in classroom practice and curriculum design, (b) publishers of basal reading programs, and (c) teachers using the workbooks that are associated with basal reading programs. Some suggestions for each group follow:

(a) Educational researchers. The developers of workbooks do not have a sophisticated body of research from which t operate when they create workbooks. Researchers have done lit le to study the relationship of the content of workbooks to that of teachers' guides and student readers. Almost nothing has been written about the instructional design, the instruction giving, or the sequence and concentration of activities in workbooks. Such information would be invaluable to the developers of workbook tasks. But even more importantly, there is almost no research that makes statements about the relevance of workbook activities to the acquisition of reading skill. Researchers who are interested in the kinds of materials and activities that facilitated acquisition of reading skill and who are also interested in the design of reading programs, are urged to carry

out investigations that can be applied to the development of workbook tasks.

(b) Publishers of basal materials. Many of the workbooks associated with basal readers have the appearance of materials written separately from the rest of the program, and after the fact. So that workbooks can be a more useful part of a program, we urge that at the outset of the development of a new program, a lot of planning time be devoted to developing plans for the integration of the workbook tasks with the rest of the program. Mechanisms must be developed that will permit the people who write workbook tasks to work regularly with other members of the writing team.

Another suggestion is that materials be carefully tried out in small scale intensive tryouts before being published. A simple and feasible procedure is to place preliminary versions of workbooks in two to four classrooms. (Obviously these are classrooms in which the rest of the program is being tried out.) As the editors or authors observe in the classrooms, they record what teachers say as they present tasks, observe students as they do the tasks, and listen to questions students ask. By analyzing the completed workbook pages and tallying all the errors, workbook designers can identify weak tasks (and poor items within tasks) and either eliminate or remedy them. Such procedures would improve workbooks enormously.

Finally, instead of the current rather surface integration between the textbooks, the teacher-directed part of the lesson, and the workbook tasks, a much deeper level of workbook and the rest of the lesson integration is suggested. Here are some ideas:

(1) New vocabulary from the stories being read, and from stories previously read, can be used in a variety of tasks and in a variety of contexts, and not only in the tasks that are about the story. Recent work on vocabulary (Beck, 1982) emphasizes how many times and in how many different contexts words need to be presented for students to acquire new vocabulary. Workbook tasks seem an obvious medium for the application of this research.

(2) Since students spend a good part of the reading period reading a story or an expository passage in the textbook, it seems only sensible that the major proportion of the workbook tasks should be based on this reading. Questions in workbook tasks that ask about the salient features of stories (plot, settings, characterizations) and about the important information in expository passages seem of more value than a steady diet of questions about short paragraphs unrelated to any other reading the students do. The application of the comprehension and decoding skills to the main

reading done in the lesson would seem to make the teaching (and use) of these skills much more functional and meaningful. Therefore, the recommendation is that essentially all of the workbook tasks should relate to the current lesson, review aspects of previous lessons, or provide for the application of information and vocabulary in new but related contexts.

(c) Teachers. The advice to teachers is for the most part obvious. Workbook tasks must be evaluated before being assigned to students. Teachers should not operate from a position of faith in the printed word, but rather from a position of skepticism. Some tasks should be abandoned because they are confusing, not important, or because they are non-productive consumers of time. On the other hand, tasks that are valuable should be repeated; particularly effective tasks can be adopted by the teacher to permit the students to practice further examples or instances of what is being taught. Teachers should become aware of which tasks require additional instructions, which pictures require modification, and which tasks most students can do independently. Teachers must also realize how counter-productive it is for students to spend a long time working on tasks on which they make many errors. Worthwhile but difficult, tasks should only be done when teachers have time to work with and monitor students as they do the tasks.

In addition, teachers should make their observations about unsatisfactory workbooks and unsatisfactory tasks known to the publishers of their basal series. Publishers will change as the demands of their customers encourage them to change. Information from teachers to publishers will affect the quality of workbooks.

Conclusion

All of the hours students spend working in their workbooks have to be considered as a part of reading instruction. What is provided in those books should be given the serious consideration of researchers, of publishers of the materials used in classrooms, and of the teachers evaluating those materials.

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Table 1

Teaching Events and Workbook Tasks

Program _____ Level Unit Lesson

Teacher's Guide	Workbook 1	Workbook 2
Word recognition 46 words	1) Word meaning items with 9 words from Lesson 10	5) Word meaning task with 8 words from Lesson 10
Word meaning 22 words		
Sequencing of story events (6 events)	2) Sequence task with 2 sets of 5 events (independent of story in reader)	6) Sequence task with 6 events, based on story
Phonetic skills introduce /sp/ sp review /ft/ ft	3) Sentence completion task with 13 sp words (1 word from Lesson 10, no review words)	7) Sentence completion items with 6 sp words (3 story words)
		8) and 6 ft words (no story words)
Locating information on a contents page	4) Table of contents task	9) Table of contents task
Optional		
a) Noting action and conversation as a means of characterization	No task	No task
b) Dramatizing good safety habits		

Table 2

Number and Appropriateness of Tasks

Program _____ Level _____ Unit _____ Lesson _____

Topic	Number of Tasks	Appropriate/ Not Appropriate	Extra Help Tasks	Appropriate/ Not Appropriate
Main Idea	6	2/4	6	2/4
Syllabication	6	3/3	6	3/3
Vowels: er, ir, ur	4	0/4	6	4/2
Structural Analysis	8	7/1	10	6/4

Table 3

Task Topics and Task Forms

page	Task Topic	page	Task Topic
21	Practice with words with ine	36	Syllables
22	Practice with oo	37	Puzzles
23	Choosing titles	38	Word identification
24	Word identification	39	Practice with words with ash
25	Using common syllables a, be, un, ful, ly, ness	40	Base words and endings
26	Vocabulary identification and use of cl, bl, pl	41	Practice with words with spr and str
27	Word referents	42	Practice with and, comprehension
28	Plural ves on words ending with f	43	Classifying words
29	Following directions	44	Contractions
30	Alphabetical order	45	Sequencing
31	Classifying words	46	Practice with words with sw
32	Practice with words with ie	47	Long and short e sounds, comprehension
33	Compound words, comprehension	48	Multi-meaning words
34	Commas as a comprehension aid	49	Practice with words with ward, comprehension
35	Noting details	50	Noting details